

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 639
By Springer

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory and legend of Hank
Williams, Sr.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to pay homage to the greatest and most enduring legend in the illustrious history of country music, Hank Williams; and

WHEREAS, by the tender age of twenty-nine, Hank Williams had passed from this world to a far better existence, but he left behind an indelible legacy of singular musical talent, inspiring performances and some of the greatest popular songs ever written; and

WHEREAS, during his all too brief lifetime, Hank Williams gave country music much of its standard repertoire, a new definition of stardom and a legend so enduring that he is still the standard of excellence to which countless singers and songwriters aspire; and

WHEREAS, no one in the history of country music, perhaps in all of popular music, has so profoundly influenced those artists who followed him as has the artistry and the legend of Hank Williams; and

WHEREAS, his songs are consistently cited as the highest standard of the songwriter's craft, and the image of this complex, yet fragile, man pouring out his soul in defiance of physical pain and inner demons during his every performance continues to inspire a legion of loyal fans; and

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WHEREAS, Hank Williams began his musical career in earnest when he made his first radio appearance in late 1936 or early 1937 on WSFA in Montgomery, Alabama; he would subsequently become a regular performer on that station for some eleven years; and

WHEREAS, with his decidedly hillbilly style and loose on-stage patter, Hank Williams along with his band, The Drifting Cowboys, quickly became one of the area's most popular entertainers; and

WHEREAS, although he was initially interested in Hank Williams only as a songwriter, publisher Fred Rose of Acuff-Rose eventually made Hank's singing career his pet project and subsequently negotiated Hank's recording contract with MGM in March 1947; and

WHEREAS, *Move It On Over* was Hank Williams' first record released on MGM and was also his first entry on the *Billboard* charts; he charted again in April 1948 with *Honky Tonkin*; and

WHEREAS, in August of that same year, he joined the cast of the immensely popular *The Louisiana Hayride* which was broadcast on powerful KWKH-AM radio in Shreveport, Louisiana and reached most of the eastern United States by means of the station's 50,000 watts; and

WHEREAS, *The Louisiana Hayride* would be the first real step toward stardom for many performers in the coming years; Hank Williams, as he was in so many respects, was first among his peers in this accomplishment; and

WHEREAS, during a session that included the recording of *There'll Be No Teardrops Tonight* and two other original songs, Hank insisted on recording *Lovesick Blues*, although Fred Rose and the studio musicians had expressed unanimous disdain for the song; and

WHEREAS, his creative instincts were subsequently validated when *Lovesick Blues* reached number one on the charts and remained there for an incredible sixteen weeks; and

WHEREAS, *Lovesick Blues* soon became an “event,” popular beyond precedent, imagination or belief, and elevated Hank William’s stardom to the stature where he was invited to perform on the Grand Ole Opry; and

WHEREAS, on June 18, 1949, Hank Williams made his official debut on the Grand Ole Opry (singing, of course, *Lovesick Blues*) to the unanimous approval and thunderous applause of both the live and radio audiences; and

WHEREAS, by the year’s end, Hank had toured Europe, had placed eight songs on the *Billboard* charts and had sold more records than anyone in country music other than Eddy Arnold; and

WHEREAS, as a songwriter, Hank had truly reached the pinnacle of his creative talents, as the mature subject matter of his songs increasingly reflected his troubled personal life; and

WHEREAS, despite his troubles at home, Hank Williams was far and away the biggest star in country music during the last three years of his life; and

WHEREAS, *Cold, Cold Heart* was the top song of 1951, and *Hey, Good Lookin’* and *Jambalaya On the Bayou* both reached number one on the charts; and

WHEREAS, perhaps the most convincing and touching testament to his enduring popularity and peerless talent is the fact that three of his recordings reached the top of the charts after his untimely demise: *Your Cheatin’ Heart*, *Kaw-Liga*, and *Take These Chains From My Heart*; and

WHEREAS, by 1954, his earthly voice had been silenced and Hank Williams had entered the domain of a cultural icon who is truly larger than life; and

WHEREAS, Hank Williams’ few, yet incredibly productive, years in the limelight changed country music forever, and to this day, his musical legacy remain its cornerstone; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE-HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONCURRING, That we hereby honor the memory of Hank Williams, the man, the artist, and the legend, reflect fondly upon the wealth of his talent and the singularity of his influence on popular music and give thanks for the great joy his songs and performances have brought and continue to bring to music lovers from all walks of life.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.